



BERKS COUNTY *agricultural land* PRESERVATION BOARD

Berks County Agricultural Center
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www.countyofberks.com/dept/deptofag

County Commissioners:

Christian Y. Leinbach, Chair
Kevin S. Barnhardt
Mark C. Scott, Esq.

Board Members:

David L. Phillips, Chair
James R. Coker, Vice Chair
Wilson M. Balthaser

Robert E. Kopfer
Robert B. Ludgate, Sr., PE, PLS
Jeremy R. Meck

Steven C. Mohn
Clyde A. B. Myers

Ex Officio:

Robert C. Ziegenfus, Ph.D.

Minutes from the June 26, 2019 Meeting

The Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation Board (Board) held a regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, June 26, 2019 at 7:30 PM at the Berks County Agricultural Center. David Phillips, Chair, called the meeting to order. Board members present included Wilson Balthaser, **James Coker**, Robert Kopfer, Robert Ludgate, Sr., Jeremy Meck, Clyde Myers, and David Phillips. Also in attendance were Mark Sprow, Esq. Special Counsel for the Board; Tami Hildebrand, Executive Director; Kimberly Fies and Amanda Burkard-Sell, staff.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS – None.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- C. Myers noted that two of the motions in the May 29, 2019 minutes lacked a mover and a seconder. A. Burkard-Sell will refer to her notes and correct the mistake. Myers also questioned as to why a discussion regarding curtilage was not included in the minutes. Burkard-Sell noted that the discussion took place in Executive Session, which is not included in the minutes.

Motion: A motion was made to approve the minutes of the May 29, 2019 meeting, as amended. (W. Balthaser, R. Kopfer)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion approved. J. Coker abstained.

III. STATUS OF RECOMMENDATION UPDATES

- The Board reviewed the previously distributed Status of Recommendations. Settlements are now scheduled for Dockets # 1710, #1111, and #1719 on July 16, 2019 and two additional appraisals will be reviewed in Executive Session, which are the only changes since the Status of Recommendations was distributed.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Five-year Outreach Activities Plan – Status of Projects

- C. Myers suggested providing plaques for the larger donors to the Farm Forever Sign Project. Myers added that there are 2 or 3 donors at the \$1,000 level and that T. Hildebrand had suggested that money for the plaques could be contributed by County funds.
- The Board discussed and agreed upon the specifics of the sign installation ceremony on the Kopfer farm. The event will be held on Wednesday, July 31, 2019 at 10:00 am;

Board members, the County Commissioners, larger donors, Township officials, and the media will be invited.

- C. Myers informed the Board that he had spoken with Stacie Jones, editor of the Reading Eagle's Berks Country and the articles on preserved farms will resume. Myers added that in addition to the article on the signs, an advertisement will be placed in Berks Country thanking all of the major donors to the Sign Project.
 - A. Burkard-Sell reported that to date landowners had requested 55 signs, with only three (3) landowners responding as not interested; landowners had contributed \$2,300.00 to the project.
 - C. Myers discussed that in addition to the plaques, a small give away, such as a keychain, should be created for other donors that could also be used at the upcoming 75,000-acre celebration.
- B. Update to Proposed Review Criteria for ACE Program Applications in Rural Conservation Areas of the Comprehensive Plan
- T. Hildebrand reported that a memo had been sent to the Berks County Planning Commission informing it of the Board's response to the updated review criteria. Hildebrand added that Shannon Rossman, the Planning Commission's Executive Director, had reported that she had forwarded the memo to the Commission's Board members to review and that a response is awaited.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review of Conveyance Report

- The Board reviewed the Conveyance report. Settlements #388 and #286 had transferred correctly; Settlement #586 is still outstanding but will be corrected when ownership transfers from the Bank. Settlements #579.0 and #401 are in the process of being corrected by the attorney.

B. Conservation District Board of Directors – Farmer and Public Director Nominations

- T. Hildebrand informed the Board that the Berks County Conservation District was seeking nominations for two of its Directors: Farmer Director, Larry Gelsing and Public Director, Brian Boyer; both current Directors are interested in serving another term. Hildebrand added that the nominations were not due until October, which will allow the Board to provide names of potential candidates or re-nominate the current directors at the August Board meeting.
- The Board discussed the possibility of the Conservation District leaving the Ag Center. K. Fies reported that the issue had been discussed that the District Board meeting earlier in the day and that the Board was exploring several options. The Board discussed the importance of all of the agricultural agencies remaining together to both provide services to the public and allow the staff to perform their jobs efficiently.

Motion: A motion was made for the Board to send a letter to the County Commissioners and other building agencies supporting the need to renovate the Ag Center to accommodate the needs of the other agencies in order to ensure that all of the agricultural agencies remain together. (C. Myers, J. Coker)

Discussion: The Board determined that T. Hildebrand will draft the letter and submit to the Board for review.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

C. USDA Farm Service Agency County Committee – Nominations for Local Administrative Area 1

- T. Hildebrand informed the Board that she had received a request for nominations for the USDA Farm Service Agency's County Committee for Local Administrative Area 1, which was comprised of the area from Bethel through Womelsdorf. The Board discussed the current County Committee members. J. Meck volunteered to serve.

Motion: A motion was made to nominate Jeremy Meck the USDA Farm Service Agency County Committee Local Administrative Area 1. (J. Coker, R. Kopfer)

Discussion: None

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- T. Hildebrand informed the Board that a request for a Rural Enterprise had been received for Settlement #113 (Kurtz) to hold craft selling events for a few weekends in spring and around Christmas; the activity will take place in an existing corn shed and meets the Rural Enterprise guidelines.

Motion: A motion was made to approve the Rural Enterprise request submitted for Settlement #113. (J. Coker, R. Ludgate)

Discussion: None

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

- T. Hildebrand discussed the contents of the Board packet, which included totals following the June State Board of Farmland Preservation meeting; currently, Berks County remains first in the State and County Program with 760 farms and 74,160 acres approved for easement purchase.
- T. Hildebrand reported that she and Attorney Sprow will be meeting to discuss the situation with the Nesting Box that had been discussed at the prior Board meeting.
- J. Coker suggested that when the signs are distributed, the letter accompanying them should include a recommendation for the landowners to check with their Townships to determine if there are requirements for placing the signs.
- C. Myers requested that the Board revisit the idea of excluding the buildings and curtilage from future easement purchases; the Board had previously discussed delineating the area as part of the easement purchase process. T. Hildebrand suggested that she will discuss with the Board's contracted surveyors as to how to best incorporate this into the process. The Board discussed delineating the actual existing curtilage, rather than a set acreage.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: A motion was made to offer the cap of \$2,500 per acre to Dockets #1904, #1905, #1908, #1913, #1914 and #1915. (J. Coker, R. Kopfer)

Discussion: None.

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Motion: A motion was made to acknowledge the submitted conservation plans for Dockets #1806 and #1711, provided that the necessary signatures be obtained for the plan for Docket #1711 (R. Kopfer, W. Balthaser)

Discussion: None

Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

- W. Balthaser reported that he did not run for Township Supervisor this year; Balthaser is the Township Supervisor representative for the Board. T. Hildebrand added that there is a general member representative position that is still vacant.
- The Board discussed the need to begin preparations for next year's 75,000-acre celebration. J. Coker and R. Ludgate volunteered to be on the committee. Discussions will continue at the August Board meeting.
- R. Ludgate suggested compiling a list of the amounts of crops that 75,000 acres can produce. Ludgate stressed the need for public support for the Program and the value of preserved farmland as smart growth.

Motion: A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 pm. (R. Kopfer, R. Ludgate)

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file.

Amanda K. Burkard-Sell
ACE Program Coordinator